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SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF/E AND AF/PD
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NAIROBI FOR REDSO

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SUBJECT: EMBASSY HOSTS DJIBOUTIAN ARTS AND CRAFTS EXHIBITION

1. (U) Ambassador launched December 4 at Djibouti's Palais du Peuple the Embassy's second Arts and Crafts Exhibition and Sale in two years for Djiboutian handicrafts and art works. The five-day exhibition featured works and wares of 22 artisan associations in Djibouti, attracted a host of viewers and buyers and generated USD 8,700 in sales to these associations.

2. (U) In her speech inaugurating the event, the Ambassador conveyed the pride she felt in having the opportunity to bring wider exposure to local artisan communities and to deepen the U.S. Embassy's partnership with artisan associations in Djibouti. She told the audience of invited guests that the U.S. Ambassador's Self-Help Program is U.S. Government-funded and designed to support small projects and programs to assist grassroots organizations and local individuals. She added that one of the most important goals of the Embassy is to promote traditional handicrafts of Djibouti while encouraging prosperity for its people. The Ambassador expressed hope that the exhibition would lead to new and innovative ways to share talents and identify markets for Djibouti's handicrafts.

3. (U) Minister of Women's Affairs, Aicha Mohamed Robleh, said Djiboutian artisans are very closely attached to the traditional culture of their country. She asked friendly countries to help female artisans in production of their work. This will lead, the Minister said, to higher quality of the Djiboutian product, training, supervision and standardization of work so that the label "Made in Djibouti" will be more competitive in the marketplace. The Minister expressed the desire to see space created for handicrafts in all areas frequented by tourists to Djibouti. She underlined that technical assistance would be indispensable to reinvigorate and inspire women artisans and enhance their economic and cultural role in society.

4. (U) The Embassy advertised extensively in support of the exhibition, placing flyers at various business establishments in Djibouti city, distributing flyers to NGOs, embassies and consulates in Djibouti and placing banners announcing the event over major streets in town and at the Palais du Peuple. The Embassy also prepared 30 second commercial segments after each local news broadcast on Djiboutian television. The spots were run in four languages. Two women parliamentarians, who are also presidents of two artisan associations, encouraged the President of the National Assembly and fellow assembly members to support the artisans. Minister of Women's Affairs Robleh told Embassy's Self-Help Coordinator that she had noted the planned exhibition and sale during the President's weekly ministerial meeting.

5. (U) Feedback from participating associations and attendees for this event was overwhelmingly positive. The associations were pleased at the volume of sales, commenting that never before had so many local artists and artisans brought together in an exhibition sold items of such volume. The most successful seller among associations was the Semiramis Group, whose wares include utilitarian and decorative items such as colorful Somali-weave baskets and containers.

6. (U) Comment: The success of the exhibition highlighted the need to create a permanent place where Djiboutian handicrafts could be produced, marketed and sold. The Minister of Commerce, who did not attend the opening, subsequently invited the artisans to join him in discussion of a possible artisan village in Djibouti. End comment.

RAGSDALE